

Fresno General Plan Implementation & Infill Development Task Force

Background

The City of Fresno has undertaken an ambitious planning process to update its General Plan with policies designed to significantly increase infill development in the city's Downtown and urban core. City planners are currently developing the implementation strategies for the Fresno General Plan Update that will achieve these results.

Fresno, like many cities in California and throughout the US, faces severe fiscal circumstances that hinder the ability of the public sector to provide infrastructure (e.g. water, stormwater, sewerage, streets and sidewalks) and services (e.g. public safety, parks, and facilities) that support and incentivize infill development. At the same time, there is substantial evidence and growing consensus in Fresno that policies which have supported unfettered greenfield development and expansion of the city's footprint are unsustainable due to their fiscal costs as well as their deleterious effect on the city's economic vitality, public health, natural resources, and quality of life. The loss of redevelopment agencies in California further augments these challenges.

The Response

Supported by technical assistance resources from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through the White House Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) initiative, the City of Fresno will partner with EPA and the California Governor's Office of Planning and Research to convene a Task Force of around 25 state and national experts in financing and implementing infill development. The Task Force will meet three times in person in Fresno from July through October, 2013, and will be charged with recommending creative, innovative implementation and funding strategies for the infrastructure and services that are needed to support increased infill development in Fresno. These include:

- Tools, policies, and strategies for Fresno to provide infrastructure and service improvements
- Tools, policies, and strategies for Fresno to incentivize private development and public-private development partnerships
- Finance strategies to improve, maintain, and increase levels of service for public facilities and services
- Options for generating public revenue for increased public services
- Strategies to attract more developers and investors with experience in new development models

The Task Force's recommendations will not only be incorporated into the Implementation Element of the Fresno General Plan, but will also become the basis of a nationally-disseminated report that uses Fresno as a case study to illustrate infill development implementation options for economically-distressed cities throughout California and the US, including policy recommendations at the state and federal levels.